

Mark Gottlieb
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I have some bad news.
My chimp escaped.

Oh, Pickles is still here... somewhere. I had been successful in early attempts to track him by scent, but when he realized that, let's just say that he came up with some very clever camouflage schemes. You can't sniff out a monkey if your whole lair smells like monkey.

And yeah, I know he's an ape. I call him a monkey because a) it's funnier, and b) it ticks him off. You hear that, Pickles? *Monkey*.

What does this have to do with *Betrayers of Kamigawa* decks? Nothing. Nothing at all. You could visit any of dozens of Internet columns to read about those. You're here because you want to read about escaped non-monkeys. And Pickles has all my decks. He stole them and ran off after I called him a monkey after he beat me. Again. With Affinity.



Affinity?!

Obviously the Super Monkey Smartifying Ray wasn't turned up high enough. Or it doesn't work on apes. I mean, the experiment was pretty successful. Pickles balanced my checkbook, offered scathing literary critiques of Dan Brown books he hadn't actually read, and started designing a Super Wombat Smartifying Ray. Those are all things smart people do. But then he started to play Affinity decks against me. I probably shouldn't have put that smushed banana in his hat, but now he's gone and I'm afraid of what might happen. He might jump out a window and run off. Or worse, he might learn that the password to my computer before I can—

.....—change it from MrsJenniferGarnerGottlieb? Yeah. Like I needed a smart ray to figure *that* one out. I can't believe the stuff this dumb primate gets away with. That thing when I made the lair smell like ape? That's true. The part he left out? *It improved the scent*. Compost heaps would be envious of this man's kitchen. And that bit about a Super Wombat Smartifying Ray? Also true. The part he left out? He calls himself Wombat. Yeah, it's a Super Mark Gottlieb Smartifying Ray, and I'm hoping it gets done fast because I cannot take the blank stares he gives me when I lose him—and I lose him every time—during our debates about the physiognomous ramifications of psychometaphysical stagnation. Every damn breakfast, people! Then he gets hyperdefensive and calls me a monkey. Real mature. Figuring out why this guy hasn't had a date in seven years isn't going to keep the anthropologists of the future awake at night.

The Ape of Things to Come

So yeah, I stole Gottlieb's decks. Want to know what's in them? Let's start with something so obvious even a monkey—a real monkey, like an *Ateles geoffroyi* or something—could see it. When variations on Winter Orb, Kismet, and Icy Manipulator are all printed in the same set, not even Gottlieb can

resist. Winter Orb on a 2/2 body is called Hokori, Dust Drinker and costs ******* more than the original. Kismet for everybody is called Orb of Dreams and costs ***** less than the original. And playing the role of Icy Manipulator to tap the one land your opponent untaps each turn is Floodbringer.

Gottlieb filled the rest of his deck with artifact mana. Gold Myr untaps each turn, and it can either make mana or attack. Guardian Idol does the same thing, though mustering the mana to wake it up can prove to be difficult. The comes-into-play-tapped drawbacks on Star Compass and Guardian Idol don't seem to matter that much when Orb of Dreams is in play. Pacifism and Echoing Truth can take care of most obstacles your opponent gets down. I suppose this deck just expects to win by attacking with measly 1/1, 1/2, and 2/2 creatures. The real fun seems to be locking down the board; if you win too fast, you won't get to watch your opponent squirm for as long as possible.

Lockness 		
Main Deck 60 cards		
4 Cloudcrest Lake	4 Floodbringer	4 Echoing Truth
4 Coastal Tower	4 Gold Myr	4 Guardian Idol
6 Island	4 Hokori, Dust Drinker	4 Orb of Dreams
6 Plains		4 Pacifism
4 Tendo Ice Bridge	12 creatures	4 Star Compass
24 lands		4 Talisman of Progress
		24 other spells

It sure is a good thing there aren't any free spells or creatures that automatically generate mana in this set.

Ape Suzettes

So *Betrayers* has some new flippers. And they're pretty easy to flip. But maybe you don't want them to flip, because before they flip, you can add ki counters, and after they flip, the ki counters become amazingly useful, but you can't add any more of them, so you only want to flip when you have enough ki counters to satisfy all your ki needs. There—that look on your face! That's the blank stare the human always gave me. Look, all I'm trying to say is that you want as many ki counters as possible, as fast as possible, on your *Betrayers* flippers.

One of the most efficient yet most ludicrous ways to do that is to play Artificial Evolution on your flipper to change "Spirit" to "Drake," then play Shrieking Drake as many times as you can that turn (always bouncing itself back to your hand). The two-card combo lets you pay **X** to put X ki counters on your hero, assuming you spent only blue mana on X.

Want to pay **X** to draw X cards, again spending only blue mana on X? Play Glimpse of Nature, then go nuts with Shrieking Drake. You can both lower and increase your efficiency by doing both tricks on the same turn. Note, humans, that you can't hack Shrieking Drake itself with Artificial Evolution to pull this off (once it bounces back to your hand it loses all memory of being changed), so you only supersize the "spiritcraft" trigger of the creature you Evolved. (Pfft. Evolution. Way to descend from me.) If the deck had Conspiracy, though, it'd be a different story.



Tangleroot allows you to wash blue mana into green mana by playing the Drake. Tangleroot plus Mycosynth Lattice plus Shrieking Drake allows you to go infinite. The Drake costs $\{2\}$, Tangleroot makes $\{1\}$, the Lattice says you can spend that $\{1\}$ to pay for the Drake. You can put a million ki counters on Budoka Pupil—but since it only flips at the end of the turn, you still have to wait a turn before attacking with a 2,000,004/2,000,003 trampler. It's a weakness to be sure. On the other hand, a few million ki counters on Jaraku the Interloper is probably going to put a crimp in your opponent's style, unless he can dispatch it immediately.

Shriek & Flip



Main Deck

60 cards

2 City of Brass	4 Budoka Pupil	4 Artificial Evolution
2 Forest	4 Callow Jushi	4 Glimpse of Nature
6 Island	4 Shrieking Drake	4 Kodama's Reach
4 Seat of the Synod		2 Mycosynth Lattice
1 Tendo Ice Bridge	12 creatures	2 Mystical Tutor
4 Tree of Tales		1 Relearn
4 Yavimaya Coast		2 Tangleroot
		4 Thirst for Knowledge
23 lands		2 Worldly Tutor
		25 other spells

Duct Ape

The nice thing about a new **Magic** set is that it always provides new best friends to some old, lonely creatures. Not Gottlieb. But some more socially adjusted fellows like, in this case, Desecration Elemental. You want to play the 4-mana 8/8 fear creature. I know you do. (I'm a cranially-enhanced chimp. We can tell these things.) But you don't because it'll kill all your other stuff and then itself. So, Desecration Elemental has a drawback. That's not anything you have to worry about anymore now that Shirei, Shizo's Caretaker is in town. Whenever any of your 1-power creatures die, you get them back for free. Whenever any of your 0-power creatures die, you get them back for free. Unless your opponent plays half a dozen spells a turn (like a Shrieking Drake or something), Desecration Elemental won't run out of fodder. Note the time delay on Shirei—you're not going infinite off this thing. But you can still have fun.

I have two words for you: Rukh Egg. Find a way to sacrifice it (Spawning Pit? Phyrexian Plaguelord?) and you get a 4/4 flying creature token every turn. And not just every one of your own turns—Shirei

pulls your creatures back at the end of every turn. Sakura-Tribe Elder gets even sillier than it was. Daring Apprentice has to grapple with summoning sickness each time it comes back, but if it counters more than one spell, you're ahead of the game. Wall of Mulch lets you pay $\{1\}$ to draw a card every turn of the game—and it blocks, too.

How about naturally 0/0 creatures that come into play with counters? The Affinity deck is too fast to add a 5-mana 2/2 creature, but casual decks can combine Shirei with Arcbound creatures to good effect. Karstoderm comes into play as a 4-mana 5/5; after it wastes away to nothing, Shirei restores it to full vigor. Triskelion can ping your opponent or his creatures twice each turn, then ping itself so it dies and comes back refreshed.



The Weak Shall Inherit



Main Deck

61 cards

8 Forest	2 Birds of Paradise	2 Spawning Pit
4 Llanowar Wastes	2 Cabal Trainee	
2 Mirrodin's Core	2 Carrion Feeder	2 other spells
2 Mountain	3 Desecration Elemental	
8 Swamp	2 Festering Goblin	
24 lands	1 Karstoderm	
	1 Pentavus	
	4 Phyrexian Plaguelord	
	2 Ravenous Rats	
	2 Rukh Egg	
	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	
	4 Shirei, Shizo's Caretaker	
	1 Summoner's Egg	
	1 Triskelion	
	4 Wall of Mulch	
	35 creatures	

Plaguelord is the secondary centerpiece of that deck. It often owns the board by itself, so it's sick when paired with Shirei. There's a whole Shirei-Summoner's Egg-gigantic stuff deck out there; Gottlieb skipped it this time out but kept an Egg in there just for fun. The little creatures are... um... they're there to... heh, they're small. Wittle, tiny creatures. Hello, Birds of Paradise! Hel-looooo! They're not answering me. Birdie, birdie, birdie. Whoa. What's happening to me? I suddenly feel like watching NASCAR and buying lottery tickets. Aw, damn, it's a whole *Flowers for Algernon* thing! Blast you Gottlieb for making such a crappy smart ray! And blast you for being so predictable! Who didn't see this coming? Who? Whooo? Whooo-hoo-haaa-haaaaaaa!

Gotcha! Not so smart after all, are you? And—oh, great. Monkey smudge all over my keyboard. And look what he did to my column! I can't believe that... wait a sec... this meets my word count! Good monkey!

Until next week, have fun with monkeys.
Mark

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